

Remarks on Eusapia Palladino

I would like to offer some comments regarding recent discussions of the medium Eusapia Palladino published in the JSE.

Antonio Giuditta (*JSE* 24(3):511, Fall 2010, *Historical Perspective*, The 1907 Psychokinetic Experiments of Professor Filippo Bottazzi) stated that Italian physiologist Filippo Bottazzi believed that the medium's physical phenomena were produced by the projection of anomalous limbs. While the author mentioned that there were precedents to this supposition, his discussion did not make it clear that such an idea was part of a wider theoretical model, the general assumption of which was that the phenomena of physical mediumship were produced by the emanation or projection of forces from the body of mediums (Alvarado, 2006). As I have argued before, Palladino's mediumship represents an important chapter in the history of ideas of mediumistic forces (Alvarado, 1993).

The literature about Palladino has observations of presumed materialized arms or shapes similar to those mentioned by Bottazzi (de Rochas, 1896:9,292, Morselli, 1908, Vol. 1:198,212, Venzano, 1907:100–101). Oliver Lodge (1894) wrote about “temporary prolongations” from Palladino's body. In his words:

I myself have been frequently touched by something which might most readily be described as such a prolongation or formation, and have sometimes seen such a thing while it was touching another person. But the effect on an observer is usually more as if the connecting link, if any, were invisible and intangible, or as if a portion of vital or directing energy had been detached, and were producing distant movements without any apparent connexion with the medium. (Lodge, 1894:335)

Perhaps this is similar to what others referred to as “an invisible prolongation of the organism of the medium” (Flammarion, 1907:423), and “ectoplasmic pseudopods” (Richet, 1922:562).

In another contribution to the *JSE*, Michael Grosso (*JSE* 24(4):705, *Essay/Review*, Reflections on Frederic Myers' Romantic Psychology, Winter 2010) rightly commented on how little interest some leading members of the Society for Psychical Research showed about the medium's personality. This neglect of the medium's psychology is particularly noticeable when compared to the writings of some other (continental) European authors (e.g., Morselli, 1908, Ochorowicz, 1896).

Unfortunately, there are no detailed full-length biographies of the medium. Interesting details about her private life were presented by Paola Lombroso

(1907), the daughter of Cesare Lombroso, who interviewed the medium (see also Miranda, 1918). Most of what we know about her comes from sections or works authored by psychical researchers such as Carrington (1909), de Rochas (1896), and Morselli (1908). The latter author also discussed topics such as the medium's confused recollections, as well as her poverty, hysterical symptoms, and mood swings (Morselli, 1908, Vol. 1:117,124,126–128,130–131, respectively), among other topics.

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